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THE WORLD'S HOPE.

The whole creation was subjected to vanity in hope, and shall be delivered.—Rom. viii. 19–21.

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PLAN OF THE AGES.

"Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth." —2. Tim. ii. 15.

It seems appropriate to begin the new volume of the Hope by presenting again an outline of the Lord's Word and Plan. This is partly for the benefit of new readers.

The exhortation of our text was by the apostle Paul to Timothy. Timothy was a teacher, and this is a word to teachers, and has reference to the spirit of their efforts. The thought on the face of it is the importance of teachers seeking to be approved of God. It should not be our aim to please men, but God. If a man speaks according to his convictions and his conscience, then he stands clear. But if he seeks to gratify others, to tickle the fancy, and please the ear, regardless of the spirit of truth, then he will fall under condemnation; and if our own heart condemn us, God is greater than our heart and knoweth all things.

Now what is here said is not intended to indicate any desire on our part to displease men, but that to please the people should not be uppermost. No teacher can stand approved even at the bar of the judgment of good men, if he places the desire to please men above the desire to be right. "Study to show thyself approved unto *God*," says the apostle, "a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth." It seems to me there is nothing that dishonors God so much as the abuse of the word of truth by not rightly dividing it.

The question may arise in some minds as to what is meant by rightly *dividing* the word of truth. I would answer that it is about the same as to *analyze* it aright. You know what it is to analyze. A class of young people attending school, would tell what it is to analyze a sentence. It is to take it to pieces and find out its different parts and the relation of those parts to each other. If a person is able to properly analyze a sentence, he probably will be able to construct a sentence and to make good use of language. The principle of analysis is the most important element in the study of grammar; and the Bible is subject to the same principle, the same great law of division. If we are able to analyze it rightly and find the relation of its different parts, then we will be able to get at the truth which it is designed to teach. Many have been led to discard the Bible as the book of God, as an inspired book, as the guide of youth and of old age, because they have not learned to rightly divide it—because the teachers do not present it in its harmonious relation of parts. I think we cannot do people a better service than to disabuse their minds concerning some things that they suppose the Bible teaches; which supposition has come on account of a failure to rightly divide the word of truth.

I believe that the Bible reveals a science. I know that many people, even professed Christians and members of the churches, are inclined to think of the Bible as a conglom-

eration of facts, commandments, promises and threatenings, that are not at all susceptible of being arranged as a science, but thrown together in a haphazard way. They are inclined to think of God's plan of salvation as loose and haphazard—a struggle between God and the devil, to see who would get the most;—and so far the devil has had the majority. Now I do not believe the Bible is such a conglomeration. I do not believe that the plan of salvation is of such a character. I believe that our Creator, the universal Father, has been moving on steadily,—slowly, it may be,—but steadily onward and upward in the development of the minds of the race of mankind, with a certain step toward a certain and glorious goal.

Standing upon such ground, we may well speak of Christ, the living Word of God, as the Rock of Ages, that rock which has never moved, and which never can be moved. It is a strong, safe standing-ground, and brings to us the consciousness that we are not living in a haphazard world,—not in the world of Hafed's dream,—not in a world where there is no law or order,—but in a world where God rules.

Now as a fundamental principle in the structure of what we consider Bible defence, let us look at 1. John iv. 8, "He that loveth not knoweth not God, for God is love." This is a fundamental plank in the Bible platform. It is the foundation of the whole Christian system. It is the foundation of all things. Love is the basis of all life. God is love, and as God is the Author of all life, therefore love is the basis of all life. It does not merely say that God is loving, or that God loves, but God is love. It is said God is merciful, and gracious, and just. These are the attributes of his being, but love is not mentioned as one of his attributes, but it is himself, his very nature. It is the comprehensive embodiment of all his attributes.

To the question, "Why does God hate sin?" sometimes the answer is given, "He hates sin because he is holy." Of course that is true, but you might as well say that he hates sin because he hates it. It is simply a repetition. I answer, He hates sin because he loves his creatures,—sin being their destroyer. And His love is what has prompted creation and redemption, the sending of Christ, and the sending of the Spirit. It is the force that stands behind the scenes and controls everything. God's love works for the good, and only for the good, of his creatures, even when things look dark;—and there are a great many things in this world that do not appear in harmony with this principle of love,—things that seem as if some evil power had control. But when we come to realize God's plan and purpose as revealed in the Bible, we will be ready to admit that God has never done anything, and has never permitted anything to be done, except what can be and will be overruled for good. I do not believe that God ever did or ever will punish sin on any other principle than for the good of his creatures. God is not a cruel tyrant, that punishes sin simply because he is angry, as a passionate earthly father would do,—strike because he could not control himself, or without reference to the good of the child being chastised? God punishes for sin in harmony with the laws of our being and for the good of those who are punished.

I believe this is the true idea of punishment even among men. It never should be administered simply because it is deserved, but for the good of society and of those punished. You will find a statement of this principle in the twelfth chapter of Hebrews, and the object is said to be that men might be partakers of God's holiness. He says that our fathers chastised us according to their pleasure, but the Lord chastised us that we might be partakers of his holiness. That one fact taken into account will help us get rid of a great many false notions. And many fearful delusions might be set aside if we would remember that God punishes men only for their good and in order to make them better.

Well, if God is love, and if he has a purpose, and if he has given us a book, we may expect to find in that book a revelation of his purpose and plan in harmony with the fundamental principle, above stated, that God is love. Anything that is not in harmony with that truth is not true. Anything that may be found in the Bible not in harmony with that truth is a misinterpretation. I know some who on that account are re-

jecting the Bible. But I cling to the Bible.

In order that we may read the Bible according to the design and get out of it the good that is in it, we need to see the Plan. It comes under the heading of the text, rightly dividing the word of truth. Referring again to the analysis of the sentence, you remember that there are three principle parts to a sentence,—subject, predicate, and object. In analyzing a sentence, you find these parts and then you find the adjuncts that modify each part. Now it is a remarkable fact that the Bible plan has three grand elements in it,—three distinct worlds. We read of the world that was before the flood, the world that now is, since the flood, and the world to come.

Three is a fundamental number in the Bible. A great many people think of the three worlds as heaven, earth and hell. Some speak of the world to come as the place where men go when they die. But the world to come is the *future* world. The world before the flood was that order of things that existed before the flood. The present world is the existing order of things. And the world to come is the state of things that will exist after the second world ends. This planet—earth—is the basis of all three.

These worlds are subdivided into ages or dispensations. The age refers to the period of time, and the dispensation to the revelation or work of God in that time. In the world before the flood, or between Adam and Noah, so far as the Bible record goes, there was only one dispensation, but between the flood and the second coming of Christ there are again three distinct ages. The first division of the second world is the patriarchal age, or one man age, when one man at a time represented God's cause. That was the time of the fathers—Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. That age terminated at the death of Jacob, and then began a new order of things that we familiarly call the Jewish age or dispensation. In it the law was given by the disposition of angels. It began at the death of Jacob when the twelve sons of Jacob were organized into the twelve tribes of Israel. For proof that they were thus organized at Jacob's death and became a nation in Egypt, see Gen. xlix, and Deut. xxvi. 5. Then we find that that nation represented God's cause in the world. The Jewish dispensation ended at the death and resurrection of Christ where the gospel age or dispensation began.

All may see that there has been a progressive movement brought to view in all these ages. In the patriarchal age the light was dim, being mainly given in allegories. In the Jewish age the law and prophets gave utterance to the truth, and the light increased, but much greater has the light been in the gospel age. It was opened by the pentecostal baptism of the Holy Spirit who has been in the world in a peculiar sense ever since. We might call it emphatically the dispensation of the Spirit. And in passing let me remark that the work of the Spirit is an inspiration, and is one of the greatest and ever-present evidences that the Lord Jesus Christ was raised from the dead and lives on high. You remember that Christ before he died said to his disciples, "It is expedient for you that I go away: for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I depart, I will send him unto you. And when he is come, he will convince the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment." And has he not been doing it? Is there a Christian man or woman who does not know that he or she was convinced of sin by that power working upon them? The very fact of the working power of the Spirit—a power above human nature—quickening the souls of men is an unanswerable evidence of the truth of the Scriptures, and of the glorious gospel of Christ contained in them.

But, to return, the gospel age is not the last one. It is the last age of the second world, but there is a world to come, and ages to come. And this is the point which deserves special attention. You know there is a very common idea that this gospel age, in which the church is being developed, is the last age in the gospel plan of God; and so we have heard men talking about "the end of the *world*." That is a bad translation of Matt. xiii. 39. It should be rendered *age*:—"The harvest is the end of the *age*."—(*aion*). Read in this way, it gives an entirely different thought. It is an *age* that ends and another *age* begins. It does not mean a "wreck

of matter and a crash of worlds," the mountains tumbling over and a literal fire kindling that will burn up God's works.

There is a fire, to be sure, but it is the fire of God's judgments by means of which all oppressive systems and all systems of iniquity shall be destroyed. That fire is burning now, and we can see it, and some are feeling its force, and it will continue to burn just as long as there are powers ruling among men that are contrary to the good of men, and therefore contrary to the will of God. Christ said "I am come to send fire on the earth, and what will I if it be already kindled." It has been burning and it will continue to burn brighter and stronger and more grandly until the flames enwrap every institution and every system of iniquity. It will indeed be a *lake* of fire. He will break in pieces the oppressors and set the captives free. That is the kind of fire in which we believe.

Yes, many people have an idea that the gospel age is the last age of salvation. They think that the church when it is saved will be taken home to glory and—what will become of all the rest? Just think of it! What a little handful the church has been! Take the church as it exists, good and bad mixed up, and what a little handful it has been compared with the mass of mankind! According to the world's census, taken ten or fifteen years ago, there was only one person in fifteen in the whole world of mankind, in this nineteenth century, who had made a profession of the protestant religion. (And I am told that in Christian lands "protestant" includes all who are not Catholics—whether making a profession of religion or not.) Think of it! All will agree that there are thousands and tens of thousands connected with the churches (to say nothing of those outside) that are called protestants that are not Christians. What a host are on the wrong side of things, to be "eternally lost," if the ordinary theology be correct! Take those that do make a profession. Take those in your own town. How is it with the members of the churches? They deplore their own weakness, their own inefficiency. You remember the Saviour said, "Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven, but he that doeth the will of my Father." You see how the numbers becomes reduced. Think of the multitudes that have lived all down through the ages past, where everything has been dark and terrible, and only here and there one that has received the knowledge of God, while teeming millions upon millions have been going—where? They were not fit to go to heaven. They did not know enough. They were not good enough. Did they all deserve to go to hell? Were they bad enough for that according to your own idea? I say they were not fit to go to heaven. You may say they (or many of them) never did anything very bad. Do you think that because a man is ignorant, that is a fit passport to glory? If so, put an end to all efforts toward enlightening men with the gospel; because if in ignorance they can be saved, and only a few accept the gospel, it is better to let them all remain in ignorance. There is something wrong in this matter. Ignorance is not a passport to heaven. Ignorance does not fit men for glory. The word tells us that "Without faith it is impossible to please God, for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him." Then no man can come to God and be saved until he is enlightened; no man can be enlightened until he has heard the truth; and no man can hear the truth until it is preached to him; and no man can preach it to him until he is sent.—See Rom. x. 13–17.

What then is the sequel? What is the outcome? O, my friends, there is a great plan of salvation that as yet has been unopened to the majority of those that profess to be Christians. The church of Christ has labored under the terrible impression that the hosts of mankind were doomed to eternal ruin except—themselves,—falling into substantially the same error into which the Jews fell eighteen hundred years ago, that *they* were all right and that God did not care for any one else. You remember they counted all outsiders as dogs, and treated them with contempt and scorn. And the Christian church has fallen into a similar error, "Me and my wife, my son John and his wife, us four and no more." And the masses are by this narrow creed consigned to a doom worse than

the most wicked would give to any dog.

But then, I am glad their hearts are better than their creeds. They are growing away from these dogmas. They are learning things differently. You seldom hear the old kind of preaching any more. There are a few who deplore the new state of things. There are a few good earnest souls in the churches who feel sad that their ministers do not shake their audiences over hell any more. There is probably not one minister in a thousand that dare stand before an intelligent audience in these days and preach as they did a hundred years ago. Such preachers would not be allowed in any modern pulpit, and yet these same people who would not hear them, and who would not pay them, have not gotten so far along that they are willing to hear the matter explained in any other way. That is one of the remarkable facts in our days. But thanks be to God, his light is moving on; and it is a Bible light, the light of God's revealed plan. It is the light of the plan of the ages that men have overlooked.

I said that there were three worlds, past, present and future. There is a world to come, and there are ages to come, in which we are told that God will shew the *exceeding* riches of his grace.—Eph. ii. 7. Well, says one, does not the Bible say that when Christ comes the door of mercy will be shut, and that others will come afterwards and try to get in, and fail? No, it does not. It says in the twenty-fifth chapter of Matthew that certain ones went in to the marriage, and the door was shut; but it does not say that this was the door of mercy; and it is well for us that it does not.

We may be glad that the Bible declares more than one hundred times that "The mercy of the Lord endureth forever." We have been taught that God's mercy comes to an end—that the door of mercy is to be shut and that there will be no more hope for anybody after this age, or after this life, and that the wrath of God will be poured out without mixture forever and ever. This is the way theology has been brought before us, and they have put it precisely opposite from the way the Bible says. They tell us that the mercy of God ends with this age and this life, but that the wrath of God continues forever. Now the Bible says that the mercy of the Lord endureth forever, and in Psalm ciii, it says, "He will not always chide, neither will he keep his anger for ever." Think of the difference! Which way would you prefer to have it, the theology that makes God's wrath eternal and his mercy limited, or the Bible idea that God's mercy is eternal and his wrath limited? I prefer it the way it reads in the Book.

It is a blessed assurance that God's wrath toward sin is for the sinner's good, and in due time mercy will rejoice against judgment. He will not always chide. He remembers that we are dust. We are apt to forget that sometimes in our treatment of others, but he never forgets it. He is tender in compassion, and merciful,—*full* of mercy. Think of it! The infinite God full of mercy! Plenteous in mercy! How much would plenty of mercy be? Just as much mercy as is needed. God's mercy never can be exhausted while there is a sinner in the universe.

Let it be remembered that the door that was shut was not the door of mercy; it was the door to the marriage. Suppose there should be a wedding in your town and a great many people invited to come, and some of them refused or neglected to prepare, and when the time for the marriage came those that were ready went in and the door was shut;—you would not think that those that were shut out were going to be put into the State Prison, or put into the fire and burned up. They would be simply shut out from the privilege of attending that wedding. It is a great privilege to be present at the marriage of the Lamb, but there is no authority for saying that those shut out from that privilege are shut out from God's mercy. Let those say it who dare. The Bible does not say it, and I would not dare to say it, in view of the fact that we are told that his mercy endures forever.

This is the key to the whole matter. If we can realize the place that the marriage of the Lamb has in the great plan of God, then instead of its appearing to be the sunset of hope for humanity, we will see it to be the sunrise. Then it becomes an important question, Where does this marriage come in the plan of the ages? Is it past? Did it take

place at the flood? Was it at the end of the patriarchal age, or at the end of the Jewish age?

To all these questions it must be said that the marriage could not have taken place in ages past, for the bride was not then prepared. That preparation is the work of the gospel age. At the end of the Jewish age and dawn of the gospel age the bridegroom went away into the far country, and the marriage is not due until his return, when they that are ready go in with him to the marriage.—Matt. xxv. Then the marriage of the Lamb is in connection with the harvest of the gospel age and the dawn of the ages yet to come, of which Paul speaks in Eph. ii. 7.

And the point to be emphasized here is that when this marriage is accomplished; when the bride has made herself ready; when the church is fully developed; instead of the plan ending there, it only begins. The fruit of the marriage comes after the marriage. The only proof of marriage is offspring. Christ is the bridegroom, and the church is the bride the Lamb's wife. Is the church to be barren? Is she to have the salvation and the glory all to herself? Will she not divide it with anybody?

O that all might learn this blessed truth, that when the church is married to Christ, she is to become the spiritual mother of a redeemed humanity. All nations that have lived or died in the past without light, that have gone down into darkness and death, will be brought under the light and influence and power of the church—the church of the first born ones—and shall be made to know the Lord. The time is coming when all shall know the Lord from the least even unto the greatest. We hear that quoted by many in the churches, but do they believe it?

Let us look at some Scriptures that have a bearing on this subject. By rightly dividing the word the Scriptures will apply themselves rightly. Some truths were applicable before the flood. Some truths, in the progressive plan, apply in the one man age, some in the Jewish age, and some in the gospel age. And some truths do not apply in any of these ages.

Let us find an illustration. People say there are contradictions in the Bible; let us look at one of them. We read in the Bible in one place that in order to enjoy the favor of God it was necessary to be circumcised. In another place it is said that if a man is circumcised he is fallen from favor. This is a direct contradiction in terms, and yet there is no contradiction if each one is placed where it belongs. The two statements apply on opposite sides of the cross. It was necessary to be circumcised in the Jewish age in order to enjoy the covenant favor of God. Since Christ came if men are circumcised they go back to the old forms and ceremonies, and they are fallen from favor. It is all right, when the word is rightly divided.

Here is another Scripture, the gospel invitation, "The Spirit and the bride, say Come; let him that heareth say, Come; let him that is athirst come; and whosoever will let him take of the water of life freely." How does this conform to the idea of election as brought to view in the Bible? The Bible plainly teaches that no man can come to Christ except the Father draw him.—John vi. 44. You know that Christ at one time gave a limited commission; and there has also been a limited application of the general commission. You will remember that when he was here on earth he said plainly to his disciples, "Go not in the way of the Gentiles, and into any city of the Samaritans enter ye not; for I am not sent but to the lost sheep of the house of Israel." On another occasion he said that he spoke to the multitude in parables lest they should see, hear, understand and be converted, and he should heal them. Is not that election? The limited commission is not in harmony with the whosoever-will doctrine. But let us put them where they belong, and all becomes plain. The invitation to drink freely of the river of the water of life is not due until the second coming of Christ. Before the marriage of the Lamb, in the gospel age even, the provisions have been limited. No man can come to Christ just when he takes a notion. He cannot come unless he is drawn; besides, the river of life does not flow till after the marriage. And yet nearly all have been using this passage as if it were always and universally applicable.

It is said that the Spirit and the *bride* say, Come. What is it that makes a bride? Is it not the marriage? Who is the bride? You will say it is the church. True, but is she spoken of as a bride before the marriage of the Lamb? Never even once in the Bible. She is called a chaste virgin espoused to one husband, even to Christ.—2. Cor. xi. 2. She is spoken of as waiting for the bridegroom to come, and then the marriage takes place.—Matt. xxv. 1-10. Then the Spirit and the bride can say, Come. Must it not be after the marriage when this is due? Can a bride say, Come, before there *is* a bride? That passage of Scripture *must* belong after the marriage.

Here in the gospel age is the time for election; there in the millennium is the time for free grace in all its force and fullness. Here the knowledge of God's favor is limited by time, place and circumstances; there those limitations are removed, and when the knowledge of the Lord shall fill the earth as the waters cover the sea, it will not, it cannot be as it is.

Go back but a few miles from many towns or villages and many children can be found that have never been inside a church or Sunday School. They have never heard a word of Scripture preached. They do not know anything about the gospel, or the other educational influences with which those in these centers are familiar. Are they as well off as you are who enjoy the light? Have they the same opportunities and responsibilities that you have? Surely not.

But the time is coming when the knowledge of the Lord shall fill the earth. That means it shall go everywhere. Then the Spirit and the bride shall say, Come, and take of the waters of life freely—without any limitations. One of the limitations of this time is poverty. There are thousands of people kept from going to church on account of poverty,—on account of the fashion and pride in the churches. You may say, They can come if they will. Would you in their places? But the Lord has promised to judge with *equity* for the poor of the earth, and this limitation, too, will cease.

Oh how important is the right division of the word! Each one of those passages has its place. Put the election where it belongs, in the gospel age, and let the "whosoever will" stand where it belongs, when the Spirit and the bride shall say, Come, and you will see God's plan is progressive, and is moving on and on, and will continue to move on until all shall know the Lord, and knowing him, shall love him. Every knee shall bow, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father. How true it is, with this view, that God is love. O that each one of us may realize it!

Some people say that this view of the plan does away with present responsibilities. But let no such impression come upon your minds. A man's responsibilities depend upon the degree of light that he has. If we have light, we are responsible for the use of it. If we neglect present opportunities we will suffer loss. If we build with hay, wood, and stubble,—bad works,—we shall suffer loss even though it is true that we ourselves shall be saved, yet so as by fire. But the other class of builders, who build on Christ with good works, these are not only saved, but they receive a reward. And what a blessed reward that will be! Nothing less than to be a part of that company who constitute the bride of Christ and share in the glorious work of enlightening and saving the nations of the earth. Of such a plan, such a God, such a Redeemer, such a work, such a hope and such a grand victory, there is surely no reason to be ashamed.

REASONS FOR PRAISE.

For healing tears,
For lightened cares,
For answered prayers,
For tuneful lays,
For stained hands whitened,
For bowed hearts lightened,
For sad eyes brightened,
We give Thee praise.

For needed aid,
For doubting stayed,
For gifts repaid,
For pleasant days,
For fortunes mended,
For friends defended,
For trials ended,
We give Thee praise.

For battles done,
For victories won,
For foes o'erthrown,
For guarded ways,
For footsteps guided,
For help provided,
For trusts confided,
We give Thee praise.

L. A. A.

EVERLASTING, ETERNAL.

SOME have tried to make a point against the doctrine of endless punishment, by claiming that the word "everlasting" is applied to limited duration, but that "eternal" refers to unlimited duration. This idea is based on the authorized version, of Matt. xxv. 46, but we have no sympathy with the idea. Nothing can be gained to the cause of truth by such reasoning or evasion of facts. The two words are precisely the same in signification. They are really the same word in the Greek, and should be translated by the same word in English. They are both translated "eternal" in the revised version, which tends to confirm some in the idea that the punishment of the "goats" is to be endless. But this inference is still open to criticism.

Let us briefly consider the words which are most commonly translated "eternal" and "everlasting." It will be borne in mind that the Old Testament was translated from the Hebrew language, and the New Testament from the Greek. The Hebrew word is *olam*, and the Greek *aion*. There are a few other words occasionally used, but these two are the most common. The definition of *olam*, as given in Young's Analytical Concordance, is "age, age-lasting." This word in the Old Testament is translated "ever," "forever," "everlasting," and "eternal." And the point of special interest is, that it is applied to things both limited and unlimited. The covenant, priesthood, inheritance, statutes and ordinances of the Jewish economy are said to be "forever" or "everlasting." Most of these it will be confessed were limited to the Jewish age or dispensation. They were age-lasting.

Exod. xxi. 6 and Deut. xv. 17 are two cases where it applied to the life-time of a servant. That was "forever," that is, age-lasting. In this case it was a *man's* age. In the other cases it was the age or duration of the Jewish dispensation. It will be confessed that these were limited. And we freely admit that the same word often has the signification of unlimited duration. This is true whenever it is applied to the duration of God or his attributes. God's age is of necessity endless. And right here it is worthy of note that many, many times it is said that "His mercy endureth forever."—Ps. lxxxix. 2. But on the other hand it is said, "He will not always chide: neither will he keep his anger forever."—Ps. ciii. 9. "I am merciful, saith the Lord, and I will not keep anger forever."—Jer. iii. 12.

The Greek noun *aion*, according to the same author and others, is defined to be an "age," and *aionios*, the adjective form of *aion*, is "age-lasting." This adjective is the word translated "everlasting" and "eternal" in Matt. xxv. 46, and in most other places in the New Testament. In Phil. 15, *aionios* is translated "forever," where Paul is writing to Philemon of the life-service of Onesimus. The meaning of *aion* and *olam* is the same. It is an age, whether short or long, limited or unlimited. It may refer to the age or lifetime of an individual. It may refer to the duration of an era, or dispensation. Or it may, and often does, refer to the duration of God, Christ and the saints. If it is applied to a mortal being's life or to a dispensation, it is of necessity limited. But if it is applied to an immortal being, it is of necessity unlimited. There is no immortality in sin.

From what we can gather from the various sources of information within our reach, we have come to the conclusion that the word, *aion*, or its adjective form, *aionios*, does not of itself indicate either the limited or unlimited duration of anything; but its duration in each case depends on and must be determined by the *nature of that to which it is applied*.

It is just so with our corresponding English word, *age*. We use the same word, whether speaking of the age or duration of a mosquito, a bee, a mouse, a dog, a horse, a man, a tree or a mountain. Then because the same word, "eternal," (which if it be a proper translation, is a synonym of age-lasting) is applied to the punishment of the "goats" and to the duration of God, it is no reason whatever for saying that if the punishment comes to an end, God himself must cease to be.

The "goats" represent a certain character or condition, which is mutable or subject to change, and the *age* or duration of punishment depends upon the duration of that mutable condition. But God is immutable or unchangeable, and therefore immortal; so that while the age of God is of necessity endless, the age or duration of punishment is by the same necessity limited.

In the government of the God of love; in the judgment administered by the all-loving and sympathizing Son of man; there can be no punishment except in discipline, for the *good* of all concerned.—See Isa. iv. 4, Mal. iii. 1–3, Heb. xii. 5–11, 1. Cor. iii. 11–15 and 1. Cor. v. 1–5.

THE WORLD'S HOPE.

The whole creation was subjected to vanity in hope, and shall be delivered.—Rom. viii. 19-21.

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GOD'S LOVE, PURPOSE AND PLAN.

THESE three things we would consider in their relation to each other. That God is love, is the fundamental truth of the Bible and the key-note of Christianity. He loves all his creatures, because he *is* love—because it is his nature to love. He never hated any of his creatures. We are told that his tender mercies are over all his works, which must include *all*, whether in heaven, earth or hell. God's love, being fundamental and infinite, must be original, unchangeable and therefore unbought. Christ came, not to *purchase* his Father's love for man, but to *manifest* it. This is an important distinction—one which affects the whole field of thought in reference to sin, death, righteousness and salvation. God could not hate his own offspring, but because he loves them, he may properly be said to hate whatever is opposed to their well-being. That—all that—he will utterly destroy.

It is not the present object to dwell directly on the idea of God's love, but to consider more particularly certain statements of the Bible concerning his purpose and plan. These if seen and understood will prove his love, without a word being said about it, because actions speak louder than words.

Some do not seem to see any difference between the *purpose* of God, and his *plan*. Hence they use interchangeably the expressions, "the *purpose* of the ages," and "the *plan* of the ages." The latter expression seems correct. The purpose of God is the *end* to be brought about, and the plan of the ages is his *way* of securing or bringing about that end. The plan pertains to the steps of the work, and the purpose has reference to the desired outcome. It will be seen that in the mind of God, the plan is arranged by infinite wisdom and properly adapted to secure and bring about what he purposed.

There is no good reason to doubt that if God's purpose and plan were known, they would prove his love. At present, though men admit in a theoretical way that God is love, they do not fully believe it. They virtually deny it,—not so much in word as in heart. It is not easy to believe that God is love from the ordinary theological standpoint. And even where people feel bound to believe it because the Bible says so, doubts will arise in the minds of thinking people when they look at the matter from the standpoint of the ordinary teachings in relation to God's purpose and plan as to man and the destiny of the wicked. His purpose and plan must be an expression of what he is, of his character; and if God's purpose is a loving purpose, then it will be, when understood, easy to believe that God is love. But so long as people have an idea concerning God's purpose and way of dealing with mankind that is contrary to love, they will find it very difficult to believe, or truly realize, that God is love. It will therefore be seen at a glance that the method we propose of looking at God's purpose and plan will be a very important step toward the development of the truth as to God's nature and character.

As to God's purpose, it may be safely said that it is to manifest himself. Then whatever God has ever done, in creation, in providence, in revelation, in redemption, and in regeneration, is for the one purpose of manifesting himself, of making himself known, and thus of glorifying his own name. "All things are of God," says the apostle, created by his word, and the Lord Jesus Christ is brought to view as the living Word of God.

The plan of creation and the plan of redemption, rightly understood, are one. Redemption is really the second step in creation. Bringing man into this natural existence is only the first step, and bringing man from the natural existence to the spiritual existence is the second step in the development of this plan of God. There are two Adams. The first Adam is the manifestation of God's power and love on the natural plane. Through the first Adam God gives us our natural life, and the higher life is given us through the Second Adam. First the natural and afterward the spiritual, is God's plan in the order of development and manifestation, and it may safely be said that man, even in the most perfect condition that is possible in the animal life, is only half made. He is like a cake unturned. He is only done on one side. He needs to be turned over, converted, regenerated. He needs to be brought forward into the higher life through the power of the regenerating grace of God manifested in Christ. It takes two steps in the great workings of God's plan to bring man up to the image of God. The qualities of man on the natural plane are characteristic of God no doubt, and it may be said that he is in God's image on account of those qualities. Some of these qualities are wonderful possibilities. But they are not developed; they are not perfected; and they cannot be until man is glorified, or in other words, until he has entered into the nature and glory of the image of Christ. When asked the question, What is man?—some are inclined to point back to Adam, as if he were the perfect or the ideal man. But in his best estate, Adam was but a shadow, "a figure of him that was to come."—Rom. v. 14. When asked, What is man? we with the Apostle point to the Second Man, the perfected, glorified One. Yes, "we see Jesus," who once took the lower nature, but now highly exalted, as the only perfect expression of the Image of God.—See Heb. ii. 5–10. In Christ we have a clear and practical expression and demonstration of God's purpose in reference to mankind.

This great idea of bringing the race of men forward to His own image is God's purpose. His purpose is to manifest himself in a race of beings like himself, of which Christ is the First, the Head and Security. God is the Father, and the family are to be like him, and Christ, in addition to being the sample, is God's *way* for the accomplishment of the great end. Of course there is another sense in which we may look at God's way,—referring to the ages and the method of operation in those ages for the accomplishment of the great end,—but in a very important Scriptural sense Christ is the Way. He says, "I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life; no man cometh unto the Father but by me." In the person of Christ God has revealed his purpose in a very emphatic sense;—He has wrought it out, in the person of Christ. Christ in his humanity represents all humanity, and the regeneration of the humanity of Christ is the manifestation and pledge of the great work of God. It is not only the manifestation of what God designs, but it is the pledge of God that the work shall be done.

We might say that God's purpose is at-one-ment, that is, that God and man shall be brought into harmony, at-one, into a grand and glorious unity. That oneness, at-one-ment, has been wrought out in Christ. He was both divine and human. He, the Divine, came in human form, and we may say that he was God manifest in the flesh;—the Word says that. Since his victory, since his work has been accomplished and he has gone on high, he is man in God. He was God in man before, and now he is man in God. Man has been brought into divinity by the elimination of the lower elements in man, which Christ had assumed, and his consequent glorification. That there is a Man in the throne of God is the basis of every good hope for you and me and all mankind. Man is victorious by the impartation to him of the divine nature, and his full and complete glorification by means thereof. That

is the at-one-ment—the two are made one. That is God's purpose.

What was thus wrought in Christ is the gospel,—God's love and purpose and plan all combined,—all revealed in the Word. The glorification of humanity is the purpose of God, and we can see in Christ the way it is to be done. What is wrought in him is the gospel at the root, the gospel of promise. It is the gospel in prophecy, and in assurance, and in fact, in its fundamental and rudimental sense. And what was wrought in him is being wrought in men through him; and what is being wrought in men through him, will continue to be wrought in men through him until the great work shall be fully done, until all mankind, whom he represents, will be brought into the glory of his own life and made sharers of his dignity; until death shall be abolished, and life and immortality shall swallow up all there is of mortality and weakness and death.

To admit, as some do, that God has wrought this work in Christ and yet claim that it will prove a failure in the great mass of mankind is to say that there is no real relation between Christ and mankind. But Paul tells us that "the head of every man is Christ." We can not believe that God's plan and purpose are going to be a failure. Isa. lv. 8–11, declares that the word he has sent forth shall not return unto him void, but that it shall accomplish that which he pleases, and that it shall prosper in the thing whereto he has sent it. Hence you will understand our position. We are not trying to dodge it nor hide it, nor in any way to water it down, nor manifest it in any partial sense. We want it distinctly and fully understood that we have full faith, full assurance, that the God who made us will save us, that the God who caused mankind to be created in the flesh, as the figure of the perfect, will bring mankind to his own perfect image in the glory of Christ, and that every human soul will be reconciled and glorified in, and on account of Jesus Christ, our Lord and Saviour. We believe it and therefore so teach.

Let us look at some passages of Scripture which seem to have a direct bearing upon the purpose of God. Let us go back to the beginning. See the threatening made against the serpent. Talking to the serpent about the woman, the Lord said, "Her seed shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel." Mark, it was not a promise to the woman; it was not addressed to her. It was a threatening to the serpent, and yet if you will look at it carefully, realizing that the serpent was the embodiment of evil, you will see that this threatening against the serpent, was *virtually* a promise to the woman. It was the gospel negatively stated. That is, the destruction of the power that cursed man, is virtually the liberation of the man. An eagle might pick up a child and begin to soar away with it. A man standing by with a rifle might well think it was a desperate moment. But he would instantly take deliberate aim and shoot. For what purpose? To kill the eagle, and so to save the child.

So threatening against the serpent, means blessing to the race of mankind, though it is not so stated. And it is a fact that that curse against the serpent was afterward converted into a promise. That was in the days of Abraham, in the One Man Age, two thousand years after the curse against the serpent was first spoken. It was given to Abraham in these words, "In thee shall all the families of the earth be blessed." The Lord himself was the preacher. We may all be glad that God, the first preacher of the gospel, preached universal salvation, universal blessing. We are quite safe to follow his lead on that line. Mark the fulness of that expression, "In thee shall all the families of the earth be blessed." The terms, kindreds, nations, and families, are all used in different expressions connected with this same promise.

It is a remarkable thing in the development of the Bible that the last things are given first, that is, in the language of prophecy. The end or purpose is told before the means are brought to view. The way the thing is to be done is not explained there. There is not a word about conditions in that whole covenant God made with Abraham. We hear so much about conditions. Men say the conditions are so and so; if men will comply with the conditions they will be blessed. That is under law where a certain thing is commanded and a certain blessing attached to obedience. That is law no mat-

ter in what dispensation it comes. We are now considering promises, not the law. Law has its place and use, but is not to be confounded with God's covenant of blessing made to Abraham. We are looking at the good news, what Paul called the gospel, in the third chapter of Galatians. That is, that in Abraham and his seed all families of the earth shall be blessed.

It may be safe here to guard against a mistake some might make. Some people have an idea that it means that all Christian men and women will be blessed by the seed. But let us bear in mind that according to the teachings of Paul in the third of Galatians the church is the seed. That is an important point. "If ye be Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed." Christ is the Head of that body, and the members of the body with Christ the Head, constitute the seed. It is not that seed that is to be blessed; the church is never called "the nations;" but that seed, or church, is the means for the accomplishment of the work of blessing the nations. The promise is not *to* the seed, but *through* the seed, to the nations. All nations shall be blessed by that seed. Now, if you say that the church, those baptized into Christ, are alone to be saved, then you are saying that the nations are not to be blessed. God said they would be blessed through the seed, and Paul, by the Holy Spirit, defines that seed as those who are baptized into Christ. Then the company baptized into Christ, and thus made the seed, are to be associated with Christ the Head in the great and glorious work of blessing the nations.

What cause for gladness that the Lord preached that gospel himself! The last things are placed first. Turning to the book of Revelation, we find John telling us among other things that there shall be no more curse. That is, when Christ's work has been done through the plan of the ages. There shall be no more curse, no more pain, no more death. Why? Because God's promise to Abraham, will then have been fulfilled. The promise was that all the nations and kindreds and families should be blessed, and of course when they are all blessed there can be no more curse. But if nine-tenths of them are to be crowded down into the wretchedness of hopeless despair, or into endless death, then how will it be true that all will be blessed, and that there will be no more curse?

Men need to know God's plan better, and know how and when and under what circumstances the powers of evil and darkness triumph. They have a place. The power of the enemy is terrible. The judgment of God is terrible. The punishment, the torments, which come in consequence of sin and disobedience are terrible. But they are not unlimited. For this we thank God. They are not endless in their duration. They *must* have a limit. Just as surely as that promise of God, given to Abraham, is ever fulfilled they must have a limit, because God says that all will be blessed, and John, in the same spirit that inspired the prophets, tells us plainly, having seen it in a prophetic vision, that there was no more curse, no more pain, no more death. There will be a clean universe: every sin banished, the curse of pain and death in every form removed, all made clean and pure and grand and glorious through the regenerating power of God revealed in Christ.

It would take too long to enumerate all the passages bearing on this theme brought to view in the Old Testament. Let us pass on and briefly notice the one before mentioned, Isa. lv. 8–11. Let us observe that God said that his word which had gone forth out of his mouth shall not return to him void, but shall accomplish what he pleases, and prosper in the thing whereto he has sent it. Who can believe that God has purposed away back in the counsels of eternity, to people "the regions of dark despair," as some say, with the multitudes of mankind? Are the horrors of old-fashioned Calvinism still to be believed? Just as surely as God has not purposed such a thing there will be no such thing; for what he has purposed this text declares shall be accomplished, that his word shall not fail. Now, in view of this, how important it is to know what God's purpose is.

We have seen that Christ is God's Word, —the living Word. There is the written word too, and all the grand elements of truth which pertain to that written word are personified, bound up, so to speak, in the person of Jesus Christ, and he is the expression of

God's purpose and plan. God has sent Him forth, and the Word shall not return void. Is not that as much as to say that Christ's mission will be fully accomplished, and the purpose for which he came will be attained? Surely so. In 1. John iii. 8, we are told what his purpose was in sending this living Word. Mark how carefully the apostle states it: "For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil." There is the purpose of God, the mission of Christ, plainly revealed. Remember Isaiah declares that what God has purposed shall be done,—that there cannot be any failure. The Infinite One knows no failure.

Yes, men need to have a more distinct and definite idea of the love, power and capacity of Christ; to know in their heart that he cannot fail, and that therefore his loving purpose will be accomplished and all the works of the devil destroyed. What are the works of the devil? All the elements connected with sin and death. And, be assured, the curse shall be removed and all the power of evil shall be obliterated. The prophet Daniel foretold that Christ would make an end of sin and bring in everlasting righteousness. This destruction of all sin, the sin of the world, was first wrought in the person of Christ as the security for the world. It will therefore be wrought out in all the world, in due time. The eighty-sixth Psalm declares that all the nations that God has made shall come and worship before him. This we would infer must include the Sodomites; but we are not left to inference. In Ezekiel xvi, we are plainly told that Sodom shall be restored and given to Judah for a daughter by the new covenant. That is the covenant that God made with Abraham, which, as we have seen, includes all nations. From Ezekiel we have learned that it reaches the dead nations as well as the living; and Paul, in his letter to Timothy, says that Christ hath abolished death and brought life and immortality to light through the gospel. Yes, the works of the devil are sin and death, and Christ came to destroy them, and when they are destroyed, God's own works, that is, mankind, will be developed and glorified.

Man, at the present time, is in a mixed condition. He is partly the child of God and partly the child of the devil. Some may deny this; but so some will deny everything else. In the light of revelation and common sense, we affirm that man in his origin and constitution is the offspring, child or son of God; and it is only in the sense of a depraved or evil character, that he is ever, in the Bible, called a child of the devil. Man *himself* is the work of God, and is worth saving; but the elements of sin, corruption and death have entered in. It is this mixture of dross, and not man himself, that is of the evil one. How beautifully this mixture and the Lord's method of disposing of the dross, are illustrated by silver ore and its purification! The prophet Malachi says that the Lord "shall sit as a refiner and purifier of silver." In harmony with both fact and figure, we may say that he loves the silver and hates the dross. He casts the rough metal into the furnace, and, when it is melted, the fire burns up the dross, the work of the devil, and the purified metal shines forth with the image of the Refiner in it. This is a clear illustration of the purpose of God, as John has shown it. To destroy the works of the devil, virtually means the saving and manifesting of God's own work.

In Hosea xiii. 14, the purpose is expressed in a different and yet in a very emphatic way: "I will ransom them [not only from the *grave*, as though they might return to it, but] from the *power* of the grave; I will redeem them from death: O death, I will be thy plagues; O grave, I will be thy destruction." Observe that it is not merely that dying is to cease, as some suppose, but the *grave*, that is, the *state* of death, is to cease, by the captives being delivered out of it. This points, with no uncertain import, to a deathless state; that is, when all shall be alive to die no more.

The Psalmist takes up the purpose in various ways. One important passage has already been noticed. In Psalm xxii, he says that all the ends of the earth shall remember and turn to the Lord, and all the kindreds of the nations shall worship before him: for the kingdom is the Lord's, and he is the Governor among the nations.—Compare with this Isa. xxv; xxvi. 9 and Rev. xv. 4. These are

positive declarations, and grandly expressive of universal victory.

Coming to the New Testament, we find this larger hope running all through it. Let us first notice the declaration of the angels in announcing the birth of the world's Redeemer: "Behold I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be unto all people." "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, and goodwill toward men." See how broad it is! Who can limit it?

Think of the statement of John the Baptist, when introducing Christ, "Behold the Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the *world*;"—not that *offers* to take it away, but that *taketh* away the sin of the world. That is his mission. Matthew and Luke both tell us that the Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost. Will he fail? The passage in Isaiah says that he will *not fail*, but that he *will accomplish* that whereto he is sent.

Take the illustrations given by the Saviour himself in the fifteenth of Luke, and they teach plainly and positively the same thing, that all the lost will be found. In the parable of the hundred sheep, one is lost and the shepherd is not content until he has found it. In the parable of the ten pieces of silver, one is lost and the owner is not content till she has found it. And even in the case of the prodigal son who *wilfully* left his father and his home, he that was lost is found; he that was dead is alive again. So in these illustrations we have the fulness of salvation clearly and distinctly brought to view.

Coming to the writings of Paul, we find him always teaching in perfect harmony with this doctrine. He tells us, in Romans v, that just as sin and death came upon all mankind through the first Adam, so through the Second Adam, righteousness and eternal life came upon all mankind. The gain is as universal as the loss, but the gain is also much *greater* than the loss. Where sin abounded, grace did *much more* abound. The wages of sin is simply *death* (not eternal); but the gift of God through Jesus Christ is *eternal* life.

In Romans viii, the apostle plainly tells us that not only the church, the little handful, the first fruits, will be delivered into the glory of God's kingdom, but that the groaning creation shall *also* be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God. The church first, and the world afterwards, is one of the elements of God's plan or way of doing things, but the purpose is still held prominently before our minds and the church has a special blessing in that they are the called according to that purpose, which is, as we have seen, that none will always be left out, but that all shall be blessed, and that God shall accomplish the work he has set out to do.

We have already noted that this idea is brought to view in Galatians iii, that all nations shall be blessed through Abraham. The teaching in 1. Cor. xv., is clear and unmistakable. As *all* die in Adam (that is, by having his nature) so *all* shall be made alive in Christ, (have *his* nature). Some indeed are saved "so as by fire," on account of evil works. And even one of the vilest is delivered to Satan for the destruction of the flesh, that the spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus.—See 1. Cor. iii. 11–15 and v. 1–5. In 2. Cor. v, we are told that God was in Christ reconciling the *world* unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them, winning them over, bringing them back. It is not God that needs to be reconciled to men, but men need to be reconciled to God, and he reveals himself for the purpose of drawing and reconciling men to himself. Paul deals largely with this theme, in his letters. In Rom. v, we are told that God commends his love toward sinners and reconciles them to himself by the death of his Son. In the same chapter, he tells us that the righteousness and life by Christ, are as universal as the sin and death by Adam. In Ephesians we are told that "In the dispensation of the fullness of times, the Lord will gather together in one *all things* in Christ, both which are in heaven and which are in earth, even in him;" thus revealing "the exceeding riches of his grace."—Eph. i. 9, 10 and ii. 7.

In Colossians i, we are told that God created all things in Jesus Christ, and also that in Christ he will *reconcile* all things unto himself. In the letter to the Philippians, we are told of the riches of the glory which the Saviour left that we might be rich, of the hu-

miliation, the servitude, the suffering, even unto the death of the cross; and that therefore he was highly exalted [lifted up, John xii. 32], and a name given him that is above every name, that at the name of Jesus *every knee* should bow, and *every tongue* confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father. This cannot be the bowing of unwilling subjects, and the confessing in despair, as some imagine, for nothing short of a loyal and happy submission could be according to the loving purpose of the Father, the accomplishment of which alone could be to his glory;—and, again, the apostle tells us that no man can say that Jesus Christ is Lord, but by the Holy Spirit.—1. Cor. xii. 3.

Paul, in his letters to Timothy, says that God is the Saviour of all men, specially of them that believe; and that he will have all men to be saved and come to the knowledge of the truth. The fact that Christ Jesus gave himself a ransom for all, will be made known in due time.

We have already quoted from John's epistles and the Apocalypse, some of the grand and comprehensive statements there made. Can we doubt them? Can we doubt that God's purpose was to reveal himself in a race made like himself? And that being God's purpose, how can he fail? One of two things must be true: either God is infinite and will triumph and fill the universe with his glory, or the devil is infinite and will triumph, and universal damnation will be the result. The same God who is able to save one man is able to save all men.

But some will say, Yes, but man's *will* comes in,—and is not man a free moral agent, and cannot he do as he pleases? Yes, man has a will and can do as he pleases *within limits*. The Bible plainly tells us that God will not allow men to do as they please always. If they do as they please and sin, they are punished; but he declares that he will overcome evil with good; that he will destroy the enmity and therefore bring in a state of willing harmony and obedience. It is all nonsense to talk about man's will being greater than God's will. Man has his way, his petty way, for a little while and reaps the consequences. God permits all that for the very purpose of proving to man his weakness, especially when he raises his puny arm against God. But God will triumph, overcoming man's will and destroying the enmity. The infinite will must be greater than all human wills put together.

We have said a good deal about this *purpose* of God, and have given some intimation of the *way*. Let us give brief attention to God's plan as shown on the chart.—See DAY DAWN. We are told that God made the ages for Christ. Away back in the beginning God foretold the triumph of the Seed over the serpent. That was in the world before the flood. Two thousand years later, in the One Man age, he gave the promise that all nations should be blessed. During the Jewish age he placed man under law to prove his weakness. The Gospel age brought to view the first glimpse of the victorious Christ, and here the church of the first born is developed, through whom we are told all nations shall be blessed.

After the Gospel age is ended, then comes the marriage of the Lamb, and in the Millennial, or New Jerusalem age, the Spirit and the bride will say come, and the river of life, and the tree of life with its fruit and leaves will work the healing of the nations.—Rev. xxii. 1, 2. And however long, or short, the time required, the Lord's healing work goes on, until sin, pain and death—all the elements of the curse—shall be no more.

You see then, there is a way, a plan, as well as a purpose. And what a glorious, loving, purpose! What a wise and effectual plan! And it is by an understanding of the steps in this plan and the grand and sure designs, that we are enabled to see where we are, and, best of all, to know that God is love, and that all will be well.

But what of the judgments? Yes, yes, judgments have a place in God's plan of the ages. There was a judgment at the end of the Jewish age, and there is another at the end of the gospel age, and there will be still another at the end of the millennial age. But judgment and death are not ends, but steps in the plan. The outcome of all judgment is victory.—See Matt, xii. 20. The end will be reached in due time, and all sin and evil and the curse are to be wiped out, judged down forever.

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We do not overlook the fact that God has threatened punishment against sin, and promised to reward the faithful; and all his threatenings and promises will be fulfilled: but what we plead for is, that *all* God's methods have reference to his purpose, and that purpose is to cleanse the universe from sin and death and bring in a state of perfect harmony and glory and blessing. This is true, no matter how dark the prospect, how great the difficulties, how terrible the punishment, how fearful the experience may be, or may have been, or will be,—one thing is certain, that in spite of it all, and through it all, and beyond it all, God is Love.

Oh, what a fountain of light and comfort! Shall we drink at that fountain? Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters. The fountain is full, it is ample. Its provisions are all-abundant. And if there is one thing more than another that every human soul needs, it is to learn to have the right thought of God. God help us to enter into his spirit, and to be led into paths of obedience and virtue and truth. O that we may know and feel that God is indeed love, that he is our Father and that we are his offspring; that we are begotten of him in love, and we will be developed by him in love in due time. God has been manifest in man in the person of Christ; and man through the same person, in due time, shall be brought up into God, and God shall be all and in all.

NOTES ON SUNDAY-SCHOOL LESSONS.

The Divine Builder.—Mark vi. 1-13.

(Lesson for Feb. 24.)

Jesus revisited the scenes of his childhood, youth and early manhood. He went to the accustomed place of worship, and looked on kinfolk, neighbors and acquaintances gathered there. He began to teach them. Words of wisdom, grace and power flowed from his lips. The assembly listened, wondering and astonished, yet coldly critical. Whence had their quiet, humble, neighbor this wisdom? He had tarried with them many years. He had been with them in their festivities and shared their griefs. He had returned their friendly salutations. He had helped build their houses, or repair their furniture, and had received their money for his work. Faithful, courteous, thoughtful and kind—they supposed they knew all there was in him. From whence had this power and wisdom so suddenly developed? They could not understand him; they would not receive him.

It is difficult for those living at the foot of a lofty mountain to form a correct estimate of its size. It is not easy for our eyes, accustomed to the wonders of nature and of God, to truly appreciate them. The sun rises and sets daily; if it were to be seen but once in a hundred years, what a sight it would be! Those people little knew what Carpenter it was who had done their work! It was he who laid the foundations of the earth, who laid the measures thereof, who made the stars also, and who planned and builds the ages, that had been their workman.

He marvelled because of their unbelief, and could there do no mighty work, save that he laid his hands on a few sick folk and healed them. Thus can unbelief, like a frost on tender plants, check and hinder God's gracious work. Thus do we often by not recognizing God's hand, avert intended blessings.

"And he called unto him the twelve, and began to send them forth by two and two: and gave them power over unclean spirits." The nation seems to have been cursed by a visitation of demons, and doubtless many of the diseases which the disciples healed were caused by these malignant spirits.

He commanded them that they should take nothing for their journey, save a staff only. It was a lesson in obedience and trust. In like manner are Christians now sent forth and bidden to take no thought for the morrow, to do their work whatever it may be, to labor at carpentering, or farming, or preaching, being diligent in business, because God has commanded it and it is right, and then to seek from him, as a promised gift, our daily bread. The sun in the heavens shall fade, before he who fulfills God's will and trusts in his promise, shall come to want.

The disciples were to visit the cities of Israel with their message of mercy and their hands full of blessing. This seems to have

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CHRIST THE DIVINE MANIFESTATION.

"For the life was manifested, and we have seen it, and bear witness, and shew unto you that eternal life, which was with the Father, and was manifested unto us."—1. John i. 2.

The relation of the Father and the Son in the work of revelation and salvation is the idea in mind just now. Would that we could briefly convey to the minds of our readers a few thoughts which come to us occasionally upon this subject. The first great truth taught in the Bible is that God did something. "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth."—Gen. i. 1. His existence is taken for granted, to begin with. We never read of his beginning nor of his ending. He is spoken of as one that *is*. That is his name. When he addressed Moses and was asked about his name, he says, "Tell Pharaoh that I AM sent you." That implies self-existence. He is. The Bible writers do not try to *prove* that God exists. They move out as if that were a self-evident proposition, as it is to all whose eyes are open. Paul in his letter to the Hebrews says that he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is the rewarder of them that diligently seek him. He assumes that great fundamental truth that *God is*.

In the New Testament he is clearly revealed as the Father. He was not clearly so revealed in the Old Testament. In Isa. lxiii. 15–17, God is spoken of as a Father, but it is evidently a prophecy of a much later time, when a certain class, not supposed to have such a right, shall own the truth that God is their Father. He is usually spoken of as God, as the Almighty, the Great God, as the Great King, as Jehovah, and he is brought to view in all the various phases of his government, leaving for the New Testament to bring to view that deepest of all phases in reference to the nature and character of God, that is, that God is love, that he is the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the Father of all mankind. The reason for this is that Jesus Christ, the only begotten Son of God, who came from the bosom of the Father to make him known, is the great characteristic of the New Testament. The New Testament is the outgrowth of the revelation of God in Christ, the revelation of the Father in and through the Son; and this is the point brought to view in our text.

"The life was manifested." God is life; "and that life was manifested, and we have seen it, and bear witness, and shew unto you that eternal life, which was with the Father and was manifested unto us." How was it manifested unto us?—we may ask, and the answer is, the life which was with the Father was manifested to us in the person of his Son Jesus Christ. And so the Father and the Son stand related to each other as the unrevealed and the revelation. That is, Christ is the revelation of Him who was previously unrevealed. He came to make God known. In God was the life and the light, but they were not known until revealed; and these great principles and truths are revealed in our Lord Jesus Christ.

God is the fountain of everything. "All things are of God," the apostle tells us. We

may therefore say that he is the sum total of all being and personality. There are some who deny the personality of God for the reason, perhaps, that our ideas of personality are limited by what we know of one another. They may be trying to get away from one extreme, and the tendency in such a case is to go to another extreme, and so to deny the personality of God altogether. But if God is not a person, then there are no persons and can be none. If God is not a being, an individual, a thinker, one that loves and reasons, and calculates and plans, and who acts upon these great elements of his being, then there are no powers of reason, no elements of thought, no plans and no personalities in the universe, and there can be none,—because all that is created can but be the manifestation of Him who is behind the scenes, so to speak, as the great Cause of all the things we see. The stream cannot rise above the fountain, but reveals the fountain. What we see, whether in nature or in Christ,—or in nature and revelation, because Christ is the embodiment of all revelation,—whatever we see, is and must be but the expression of the infinite God, he that *is*.

Some reason God away by a certain method of progression or evolution, as they speak of it. They claim that things begin at nothing and work up and up and up until something grand and glorious is reached. Now the Bible never says a word about things beginning at nothing; it never says a word about this earth being created out of nothing. Out of nothing, nothing comes. What does the Bible teach? It teaches that God created all things of himself. "All things are of God," created out of his own infinite substance. They are brought out, manifested, declared, revealed, made known, developed; but they are all developed by an infinite force that was in him and that was seeking development through creation and the great plan of revelation through Jesus Christ.

We believe in progression just as much as those who deny a personal God, but we claim this, that nothing can rise higher than its source. This is a great principle in philosophy and can be proved. Pour water into a pipe, and if the pipe has an upward bend in it, the water will rise up exactly to the level of the place where you are pouring it in. If the other end is higher than where you are pouring it in, you can only fill that pipe up to the level of the fountain. If the other end is not as high, the water will run out, or will be thrown up in the air, in an apparent effort to reach the height of its source. The point is, water, or anything else, will find its level; and nothing can be greater than that which caused it. If God is not a person, he could not create a person. If God is not a substance, he could not create substance. He cannot produce anything greater than himself; he can only produce things out of himself.

So we read of Christ being the express image of his Father's person. We claim that the Scriptures teach the personality, the individuality of God. It is because of his individuality that he can be our Father. What would you care for a God that did not know anything, that had no intelligence, that had no care for anybody or anything, but was simply a dead principle in nature, a certain blind, dead force?—one that did not love you, one that did not know or care anything about your interests, or your wants, that could not guide nor direct you, that could not know or provide for your wants, only in that blind way some people talk about, by the force of law or principle? I believe if there is anything in this world that man needs, it is to know and feel and realize that God, our Creator, is a loving, active, intelligent being, your Father and my Father, the Author of our being by the very force of his love; to realize that inasmuch as our Father is infinitely high, we will be brought high up through Jesus Christ, and made one with him, eternal and glorious in our being because the Fountain of our being is eternal and glorious. We never will be higher than he, and indeed we never can be equal with him, because he is the infinite One and in him all things consist;—in him all else lives and moves and has its being.

The life was manifest. It is a remarkable fact that God is said to be love, life and light. What do we know of light or life or love, only as they are manifested in some way? We do not know anything about them. So while God is an infinite being, we

do not know anything about him except as he is manifested, made known, revealed. This is the great object of creation, of revelation, and we may say, of salvation. God's work in all its phases is for the very purpose of manifesting himself, in all the fulness of his glorious character.

Take the one illustration of light. We are told in connection with our text that "God is light." Let it be observed that the Bible nowhere says that *God* is "the light of the world?" It says that in him is light, but of Christ, the *Son* of God, it is said that he is "the light of the world." Some may ask, What is the difference? The idea seems to be that "the light of the world" means, the light *manifested* so as to make it appreciable, apprehensible, understandable. It is the light brought where we can see it and use it. Look at a simple illustration upon this point. Here is a lamp burning. Where does the light come from? You will all say it comes from the oil. But do you see the light in the oil? The light must be in the oil, or it could not be brought out of it, but before it can be seen, it undergoes the process of burning. All the light that can be brought out of that oil, is in the oil before it begins to burn. We call it latent light, undeveloped light. Then, God and Christ are to each other just as the oil and the burning light. God is the Source of all light. He is light in himself, and Christ is the manifestation of that light. He has brought the light and life of God within our reach.

That is what the apostle was talking about when he said, "That which was from the beginning, which we have seen with our eyes, which our hands have handled of the word of life, that which we have seen and heard declare we unto you, that ye also may have fellowship with us; and truly our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ. These things write we unto you that your joy may be full."

Why does he say "that your joy may be full?" It is this great truth, my dear friends, that all we have seen and felt and realized and loved, in the person of Christ, is the manifestation of the infinite love of the Father who sent Christ into the world for the very purpose that his love and his grace and his life, in their infinite fulness, might be made known to you and me. If this principle were clearly and distinctly understood, it would help to correct a great many things.

One of the things it would help to set right is the old-fashioned notion we perhaps have all been trained in more or less. Some of us well remember how we felt about it. We had an idea that God was angry with us and hated us because we were wicked, but Christ was good and kind and compassionate and loving. All the good qualities were in Christ, and he had been sent into the world to do something to appease God's anger, to please him, and make him feel good and pleasant toward us. Now that is a great mistake. Christ did not come to appease God's wrath; he did not come to reconcile God to us; he did not come to make God loving and kind to us. O no, God always loved us. All things that were manifested in Christ, God is, and was before they were manifested. *God* so loved the world that he *sent* his Son.

The great mission of Christ, so far as revelation is concerned, is to bring God's love and saving power within our reach where we could understand and take them to our hearts as a child clasping a Father that he had not known before, so that all the fulness of his saving love and power might be manifested in us to lift us up to himself through our Lord Jesus Christ. *God* is light, and that light was manifested in Christ. *God* is love, and that love was manifested in Christ. It is *God's* life that Christ gives us. The whole scheme is for the purpose of bringing a Father's love so near to our hearts that we may be able to appreciate it, and be drawn by it near to that Father; that we may be impressed by the great truth, not only that God is, but that he is the rewarder of all who seek him in Christ.

O that we may view ourselves as vessels, empty, if you will, ready to be filled. O that we may place our hearts close to Christ's, so to speak, so that the love of God, revealed in Christ, may pour itself into our hearts and cause us to love him, to love truth and righteousness and holiness and purity and all the elements of God's own character, revealed in Christ, and to love one another with pure hearts fervently. And may that love reign in our hearts, until it shall be true that all obstacles, all enmity, all selfishness, every element of evil, may be removed from us, and we shall be like him, filled with all the fulness of God.

proof he did not go to the Prophets or to the Psalms, which they rejected. They were like some schools of modern thinkers; they would accept of a little Scripture and reject the rest. Christ knew it would be folly to bring evidence before them that they did not accept. But they accepted Moses as an inspired man—a law-giver of God, and so he said, Even Moses showed this doctrine of the resurrection at the bush when he said, "I am the God of Abraham and of Isaac and of Jacob." Is not this as much as to say that these three men represent the dead,—all the dead? Let us look further: "For he is not the God of the dead," as you Sadducees count the dead, "but of the living, for ALL live unto him." This is the climax. Have we not here proved the proposition from the words of the Master? Has he not quoted the words of Moses directly and applied them universally? From the standpoint of Him who sees the end, with whom all is now, even those yet unborn are alive in Christ. *All live unto him.* If Christ does not teach that God is the God of every human being who has lived, or will ever live, then it could not be taught in words. If he does not teach the resurrection of all unto that state in which they cannot die any more, it could not be taught in human language. He says whoever are counted worthy to obtain that world and the resurrection from the dead, neither marry nor are given in marriage, "Neither can they die any more;" then he goes on and applies it, as we have already shown, to universal man. There is no death after the resurrection—death is swallowed up in victory.

Who has not an interest in this great fact, this expression of infinite wisdom from the mouth of the great Teacher, the Saviour of mankind? Who has not a share in it? It comes to the heart as a well-grounded, deep-seated hope, manifested through the wisdom and power of Christ, that each one has a claim on that glorious inheritance that God has provided and arranged for all his creatures.

When we talk of these things, we are not merely appealing to the emotional nature, exciting the imagination and feeling in any direction, but we are talking of great, solid, fundamental truths, truths that are as a rock that cannot be moved, nor turned upside down by any power of evil. When trials and difficulties come; when afflictions and sorrows throng in from every direction; how much we then need to feel that underneath us lies the Rock, that the everlasting arms are around us, that the infinite purpose of the Creator can never be altered, but that he is caring for us even in the midst of the darkness, and bringing us on through to the light and victory. This will encourage us to say with David, "Though he slay me, yet will I trust him." How simple and strong and blessed is such a faith! A child may possess it. It satisfies the longing heart and gives rest to the weary. What a grand thing it is to feel that God is caring for us, at all times. He will never leave us nor forsake us. He will bring us on until we reach the goal of the perfect day. God help us to be strong in this simple faith, this faith in him who is the Rock of all ages, the infinite Expression of God's wisdom and grace and love and saving power. Because he has all resources, he cannot be thwarted nor fail in his purpose to make all live to God.

CHRIST'S PRESENCE AND WORK.

"Be still, and know that I am God. I will be exalted in the earth, I will be exalted among the heathen. The Lord of hosts is with us. The Lord reigneth, let the earth rejoice: let the multitude of the isles be glad." Dear ones, in the present Lord and King, (although unseen except by faith) do we fully realize the times in which we live, and the present necessity of diligence?—having on the breastplate of faith and love, and for a helmet the hope of salvation; for it says, "Clouds and darkness are round about him; righteousness and judgment are the habitation of his throne. Truly the time has come, the due time. Do we not see the darkness prevailing in the hearts of them that call him "Lord, Lord?" Speak to them of his presence, they have no ears; or, having ears, they hear not; eyes have they, but they see not, for the darkness hides it from them. And they prefer darkness. They do not see him; therefore he is a stone of stumbling and is rejected by them.

But how is it with the children of the light? For we are not of the night nor of darkness, that this day should come upon us unawares. For we ourselves know accurately the Lord's day is coming like a thief. Even some of those who are saying, "Lord, Lord," and go out to meet him, will not heed the warning to get more light concerning his presence, so that they may be able to go in before him, or see him with the eye of faith. They expect to see him in the flesh, and so are not ready to open the door when he knocketh. But blessed are those servants whom the Lord when he cometh shall find watching. He has said to them, that he should gird himself and make them to sit down to meat (in heavenly places, being filled with spiritual knowledge) and he will come forth and serve them.

And dear ones, are we not being taught of him day by day through the Spirit and the Word? His word is Spirit and it is truth, and we are being filled with it. Praise the Lord! And how we rejoice at the remembrance of our present loved One: for it says, Righteousness and judgment are the habitation of his throne. "Yea, in the way of thy judgments, O Lord, we have waited for thee. The desire of our soul is to thy name, and to the remembrance of thee. With my soul have I desired thee in the night; yea, with my spirit within me will I seek thee early; for when thy judgments are in the earth, the inhabitants of the world will learn righteousness."—Isa. xxvi. 8, 9.

O blessed hope! though they do not see it yet, they will in due time. Praise be to his holy name! For the Lord will make bare his holy arm in the eyes of all the nations, and all the ends of the earth shall see the salvation of our God. But first the fire goeth before him to burn up the wickedness of the wicked. And it must burn till the dross is all burned out. It will be a judgment of fire, a judgment unto victory. O yes, I am so glad it is unto victory. Then will all evil be wiped out. Glory to God for such a victory! Then the light that proceeds from his throne will enlighten the world, and they shall see and tremble, and the hills (earthly governments) shall melt like wax, at the presence of the Lord, at the presence of the Lord of the whole earth. For the Lord will make known his salvation; his right hand and his holy arm hath gotten him the victory. His righteousness hath he openly showed in the sight of the heathen. All the ends of the earth shall see it. Let the floods clap their hands; let the hills be joyful together before the Lord; for he has come to judge the earth. With righteousness shall he judge the world and the people with equity. Then shall the people give unto the Lord the glory due unto his name, and bring an offering and come into his courts.

O, precious time,—the time of the salvation of all. It is the salvation of God. Who is like our God? Truly God is love; and he will bring it to pass in due time. Lord, we wait for thee. O! magnify the Lord with me, and let us exalt his name together, all ye saints of his. Let us sing unto the Lord, and give thanks at the remembrance of his holiness. And in this time of his presence, How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him (those proclaiming this) that bringeth good tidings, that publisheth peace, that bringeth good tidings of good, that publisheth salvation, that saith unto Zion, Thy God reigneth.

Beloved saints of the heavenly calling, are we publishing this good news with as much zeal and energy as we can, and to the best of our ability? If we cannot do it in one way, may we not try another? Keep working for the Lord even in the every-day duties of life. Let us do all as unto God and not to men, for we seek his approval in all things. As we have received the gift, let us minister the same, as of the ability which God has given, that God in all things may be glorified through Jesus Christ. Let us keep on the whole armour of God, that we may be able to stand against the spiritual wickedness in the high places. We must prove ourselves proficient co-workers and messengers,—the light-bearers of the good time coming, the glad tidings of peace and joy to the whole earth. For we have approached to Zion, a mountain and city of the living God,—the heavenly Jerusalem, and to myriads of angels, a full assembly, and to a congregation of first-borns, having been enrolled in the heaven, and to a Judge who is God of all,

and to spirits of just men made perfect.

O, what a glorious prospect! What riches, what joy and peace belong to those who are waiting upon him who has come. With their vessels filled with oil, searching the Word, digging for the hidden treasures, the heavenly wisdom; not willing to stop at this truth or that, till we have come to a perfect understanding of the plan of God, which can only be accomplished by constant prayer, and righteous, holy living, drawing very near to him, listening to the voice of the Spirit.

Let us, then, dear ones, follow on. Though we have not yet attained to perfection, it is our purpose and desire to see him and be made like him. For this reason, we willingly give up all for Christ, and he has given us his Spirit that he may lead us into all truths; for God hath revealed them unto us by his Spirit; for the Spirit searches all things, even the deep things of God. And it is of these things we speak,—not in words taught by human wisdom, but by the teaching of the Spirit, which unfolds spiritual things to spiritual persons.

Behold what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the children of God. It is said, "Be ye imitators of God as dear children;" "Be ye holy, for I am holy;" "Ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people, that ye should shew forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvelous light." Beloved, seeing we have received so great favors from the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, what manner of persons ought we to be as regards holiness and completeness in him; yielding all our energies and powers for his use, giving diligence to make our calling and election sure. If we do these things, we shall never fail. Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, that Father of mercies and God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our afflictions, in order that we may be able to comfort those in every affliction, through the comfort by which we ourselves are comforted by God. Let our gentleness be known to all men. The Lord is near.

DETROIT, MICH. M. A. FINK.

CONCERNING "NO FEAR."

TO THE BROTHERS AND SISTERS OF THE HOPE:

I THINK I could not have made my meaning very plain. First, I want to say, that I think no one of you, not even Bro. Paton, has written more in defense of the Larger Hope (I like that name better than the old one) than I have, though it has been mostly in private letters, covering a space of more than a quarter of a century, as many can testify, and what I have said has been from an unmixed love of the cause.

The last thing I intended was to cast any reflection upon the Universalist ministry. I did not intend to intimate that the one of whom I spoke was not a good man, only not very spiritual. He excelled in argument, delighted in it, was remarkably successful in convincing people, and devoted himself wholly to that one subject. The point I wished to make is this; that if to convince a person of God's love to him is all-sufficient, every person thus convinced will, as a result, turn to him. In this case almost a whole neighborhood were thus convinced, yet remained irreligious, and I cannot but conclude that a man of earnest piety, preaching practical sermons, would have had a better effect in spite of erroneous doctrine.

Again, is there not an unreasonable and destructive fear, and also a fear, different in degree, perhaps in character, which is wholesome and necessary? For instance, there is the fear of death which is so irrational and unnatural, but there is also a fear, or shrinking, if you prefer the term, which is instinctive, God-implanted, in our nature, for our protection,—which fear or dread is removed when it is no longer needed. Every word of warning is an appeal to fear. A boy is growing up among saloons. A wise parent not only tells him that God loves him, but he tells him also of the dreadful effects of the cup; he appeals to the fear of consequences. May it not also be necessary to point ont the dangers of prayerlessness and irreligion? Is it not true that the prodigal knew his father's love as well when he went away and while spending his substance in riotous living as when he returned? Did he not know it all the time? And was it not his hunger and destitution that led him back?